Haze

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Haze

by karinakamichi

Summary

When Sakura attempts Suicide, it's up to her friends to be there for her in the future. InoSaku. Some Past NaruSaku/SasuSaku Content. Will include content such as Self-harm, Suicidal Thoughts and Actions, Eating Disorders, Sexual Assault, Trauma, and possible drinking, though no certainties. Everybody has issues going on in this. Takes Place After Chapter 699.

Chapter 1

Title: Haze

Summary: When Sakura attempts Suicide, it's up to her friends to be there for her in the future. InoSaku. Some Past NaruSaku/SasuSaku Content. Will include content such as Self-harm, Suicidal Thoughts and Actions, Eating Disorders, Sexual Assault, Trauma, and possible drinking, though no certainties. Everybody has issues going on in this. Takes Place After Chapter 699.

Disclaimer: I don't own Naruto or any of the characters.

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Kakashi was a man who could be one of the most relaxed sometimes, but also one of the most serious when he needed to be. However, nothing could have possibly prepared him for the night medical ninja stepped in his office with news that threatened to turn part of his world upside down.

"Lord Sixth, we have bad news. It's about Sakura Haruno!" They announced, with concerned eyes.

"What's going on?" Kakashi asked, immediately alert.

"Her mother just brought her in with numerous lacerations on her wrists! We believe she tried to, um, kill herself, sir! She keeps slipping in and out of consciousness, and we're having trouble stabilizing her." One of them explained.

"We've had somebody else head out to called in Lady Fifth, but we thought you would want to know as well, since she was... your student..." The other added, obviously nervous.

Kakashi was having trouble processing the the news that was delivered to him, but once again forced himself to respond.

"I see. Thank you for letting me know. I'll be there shortly. You're both dismissed." He said.

"Sir." They responded and left.

Kakashi stood there for a moment, trying his best to steady his breathing and clear the fog in his mind, flashbacks of finding his father in a pile of his own blood and a gaping stab wound in his abdomen coming back full force and haunting him.

"Kakashi-sensei… Sometimes, I… Sometimes, I don't feel right. Like kind of depressed."

"Sakura, we just came out of a war, people died. It's no wonder-"

"No, you don't understand, everything feels wrong *! I can't take it anymore..."*

"Again, what you're going through is completely normal. Just try to relax and take however much time you need."

"Y...Yeah, sorry, you're probably right… Haha, I shouldn't have bothered you about something so trivial. Just ignore me."

Kakashi felt a bit a of nausea rise in his stomach as he recalled a talk they had just a few weeks ago. The signs had been right in front of him, but he'd push them to the side, because he hadn't taken it seriously. How could he have just-? He had to hurry.

…

"Sakura… Oh god, no." Tsunade could hardly process the sight before her after she was called in by medics, but none the less, she approached Sakura's side where she was laying on

the gurney, taking Sakura's hand in hers, and immediately starting to heal the wounds on her arms..

"Shis...shou…?" Sakura spoke weakly, tears welling up in her eyes as if she was ashamed. "'m... sorry, I-"

"No, don't apologize… We're going to fix this. Okay? Everything's going to be alright." Tsunade gave a small smile, wiping away her student's tears.

Sakura didn't say anything, but did look away.

Tsunade was barely able to keep her composure. Her skin was so pale, and littered with too many scars to count. Why hadn't she healed them?

"What's with the long sleeves, Sakura? You changed your whole look. I kind of like it."

"Yeah, well, short sleeves are nice, but I sort of thought it would be nice for a change, you know? It's actually more comfortable this way."

The realization dawned on her at that moment. It had been right there before her and she hadn't suspected a thing.

"I'm sorry, my daughter is always causing so much trouble for me." Tsunade looked up when she heard Mibuki's voice. "I don't even know what goes through her head half the time. She's such a handful."

At that moment, Kakashi walked in hear the discussion.

"I didn't do this to hurt you…" Sakura responded weakly.

"Well, you sure as hell *achieved* it, didn't you?!" Mibuki suddenly snapped back, stepping towards her, causing Sakura to flinch and look away. "Thanks to your actions, every person in here is having to deal with your drama when they could be tending to people who actually matter!"

"Oh boy…" Kakashi thought. Family arguments were the last thing he wanted to get involved in, but this… This was just impossible for him to ignore.

"Everything you do anymore is an attempt to punish me!" Mibuki shouted. "Whether it be losing all of our savings, or not listening to simple instructions, or… or *this* …!"

"Get out…" Tsunade muttered, not about to stand around and tolerate listening to Sakura being talked to like that, least of all by a woman who claimed to be her *mother.*

"Is the only person you care about yourself, Sakura?" Mibuki ignored her.

"I said leave!" Tsunade shouted, startling everybody in the room.

"Ma'm, I'm going to have to ask that you step out of the room." Kakashi decided to intervene before things got any further out of hand. Mibuki glanced between them, as if she wanted to say something more, but thankfully decided to comply, leaving the room. Sakura's father was no where to be seen.

"I didn't want to hurt anybody- I wanted- I just wanted it to stop..." more tears spilled from Sakura's eyes.

"I know," Tsunade squeezed Sakura's hand in a comforting manner. "You're okay, Sakura, she's not here anymore, so just try to relax, okay? Everything's alright…"

"Lady Fifth is right, Sakura." Kakashi offered in a small voice. "We're going to get through this. You just have to trust us."

Although the old scars were still there, all of Sakura's fresh injuries were healed now as if they never existed. Sakura was unable to keep her eyes open after that, her vision beginning to blur, her eyelids feeling far too heavy. It wasn't long before she let darkness consume her.

"She needs a blood transfusion, now. We can't waste any time!" Tsunade demanded, looking up at the near by nurses, who immediately responded and started to take action. She wasn't about to lose her. She couldn't. Not here. Not like this. *You can't die on me . Just hang in there. Just a little longer. Please.*

Kakashi was under a similar line of thought, only slightly more composed than Tsunade. Seeing his student lying in the stretcher, with scars covering her wrists, her skin pale, bags under her eyes, he felt a gut wrenching guilt for not having payed closer attention. He hadn't taken her seriously before and now this had happened.

He should have asked why. He should have tried to probe further, to really talk and listen to her. She had went to him because she trusted him, but he had just brushed her off.. And now she'd tried to *kill herself.* The gravity of the situation… It was just too much for him to process.

Tsunade reached up, gently brushing some of the teen's hair out of her face. Her lips tightened, but her eyes softened. The last time she'd seen her, Sakura had seemed absolutely fine! What could have possibly happened to have changed that? Or had she been depressed like this all along since the war?

If there was one thing she'd learned in her time training Sakura, it was that she rarely ever opened up to others about her own insecurities and struggles. Even so, she was supposed to be practically the best medic ninja out there. She should have recognized the signs without even a second glance. She should have seen such a thing happening before it happened and prevented it.

She swallowed.

"Kakashi, do you mind staying with her for a few minutes? I won't be long, I just need to fill out some paperwork." Tsunade said. Sakura would no doubt have to be on suicide watch after this. There wasn't any guarantee of how much it would really do for her, but it *was* protocol.

"Of course. Take your time." Kakashi nodded, before taking a seat next to Sakura and looking at her unconscious form with a saddened expression.

What had been on her mind when she had come to him for help that day? What had pushed her to this…?

The questions nagged at him, tearing him to pieces, gnawing at his conscience, eating away at his very existence.

He should have asked.

He should have *asked.*

Why did he just let her walk away?

He wanted to tell her sorry.

He wanted to embrace her, to tell her everything would be okay, apologize for not having been a better teacher to her.

He hated it. But, as it was, the only thing he could do was wait for her to wake back up.

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A/N: I hope y'all like this so far...

Chapter 2

Story: Haze Chapter 2
Disclaimer: I don't own Naruto.

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“Thanks for watching over her, Kakashi…” Tsunade said as she finally returned to the hospital room Sakura was in. The nurses were gone and there was an IV attached to her arm, as well as several other cords, one of which was providing to her blood. Much to her relief, some of the color appeared to be returning to her skin.

“Don’t mention it…” Kakashi dismissed it. “Is her mother still here…?”

“No, I think she left…” Tsunade sighed. “And she doesn’t know how lucky she is that *did* , because if she *hadn’t* , I don’t know what I would have done. What kind of mother talks to their daughter that way? And right after she tried to *commit suicide* , no less!”

Tsunade was beside herself, and Kakashi could see it. In truth, he felt the same, but was simply better at staying calm than her.

"I can't begin to imagine why some parents think treating their children like that is acceptable… I've met her a few times now, but I had no clue that she was like that..." Kakashi murmured.

“…I’ve put her on Suicide watch. I can only *hope* that she’ll comply with the doctors in the case that one of us aren't around and not endanger herself any further… But, given why she's here, she's more than likely to try again...” Tsunade said, sitting next to Sakura on the stretcher. It wasn't something she wanted to imagine, but, at this point, it was unwise to not count it as a potential risk.

“Right…” Kakashi mused.

“…Did she say anything to you before this…?” Tsunade asked, glancing to the side, trying to keep her eyes off the scars on Sakura’s arms.

Kakashi knew there was no point in lying. If he did, it would just come back to haunt him later on.

“Well, a few weeks ago, she did seemed bothered by something, but she never specified what and I guess I didn’t take it seriously enough. I’m realizing now just how much of a mistake that was… I really should have pressed the matter further.” Kakashi said, horrible guilt radiating from his entire being.

"Don’t, you can’t blame yourself for this, Kakashi… Everybody reacts to these kind of situations differently.” Tsunade pointed out, obviously frustrated. “The signs can be right in front of you, and you don’t even think twice about it until after it’s too late. If anybody

should be held responsible, it's me… Aren't doctors supposed to save people…? I didn't notice a *thing* until I was called here..."

Kakashi wanted to tell her not to blame herself as well, that Sakura wouldn't want them too, but in the end, he merely let out a sigh. "This is definitely going to be stressful for all of us to get through… I'm just glad she didn't succeed…"

"Yeah..." Tsunade said in a low voice.

It was easy to say that, but they both knew that if she'd been found any later that wouldn't have been the case, and that was a truly terrifying thought.

"I'm kind of worried how Naruto's going to react when he finds out... " Kakashi said, with a solemn look. He knew of Naruto's feelings for Sakura and how much he cared about her. He didn't know if his romantic feelings still remained, but he would no doubt be devastated at hearing that she tried to take her own life.

"There's no doubt he'll be upset by this… but Naruto has been around Sakura longer than most of us… Knowing him, he'll probably come up here every single day to make sure she's okay… He might even refuse to leave her bedside." Tsunade pointed out, with a small smile.

"Well, that certainly does sound like him… Nobody in this world could beat him in persistence..." Kakashi admitted. "And Sakura thinks a great deal of Naruto, if there's anybody that she would listen to, he's one of them."

"Any word from Sasuke as of late…?" Tsunade asked.

"No I haven't seen or heard from him in months…" Kakashi said. "But I should probably send out a message for him tomorrow to stop by if he gets the chance..."

Although he wasn't mad at Sasuke per say, he wished that he would make an effort to come back and visit more. He understood that Sasuke felt massive guilt for the things he'd done and that by taking time away from the village, he was trying to find some peace with himself, but he failed to realize that he pushing everybody away again, trying to carry the burden by himself, the same thing he'd always done. It wasn't something he could have had to do alone, and Sakura needed all the support she could get right now.

"...I'm sure she's missed him…" Tsunade murmured.

At that moment, Ino suddenly popped into her head. Come to think of it, they'd been spending quite a bit of time together as of late. Not to mention they were childhood friends and Ino had known Sakura the longest… She didn't know all the details of their past, but from what she heard, Ino had inspired Sakura, and saved her from bullies when she was in the academy. Maybe she would but that would have to wait until tomorrow as well. Maybe Sakura would be awake then...

"Are you going to stay with her tonight…? Or should *I* …?" Kakashi asked.

“You’re the Hokage now, Kakashi. You need your rest. So it’s probably best if I do it…” Tsunade told him.

Kakashi didn't disagree. “Well, I can't argue with that… You *are* probably more qualified to deal with this than I am anyways…”

He of course meant that in more ways than one.

Tsunade shook her head. "Now don't go counting yourself *too* short, Kakashi…"

"I'll try, but I can't make any promises." Kakashi sighed as he stood up. "Well, I guess I'll take my leave now. I'm assuming it's gonna be a little while before she wakes back up... Call for me if something comes up..."

"Understood..."

…

A/N: Alright, I hope you all like this so far. Mibuki in this story is kinda based off my mom, so I'm kinda projecting? Cuz she basically did the exact same thing to me.

Chapter 3

Story: Haze Chapter 3

Disclaimer: I don't own Naruto.

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Corpses.

Corpses everywhere.

Neji.

The smell the blood had filled the air.

"Naruto."

He had frozen. He was weak. He hadn't been able to stop it.

So many people died *and it was all his fault.*

"Didn't you say you weren't going to let anybody die, Naruto?"

"Naruto, wake up."

Naruto woke in a cold sweat, desperately wiping the tears from his eyes. He'd been having nightmares every night now. It was always the same damn thing and he hated it.

"I'm sorry, you appeared to be having a nightmare. I read in a book once that when somebody is tossing in their sleep like that, it's best to wake them up. How are you feeling...?" Naruto jumped at hearing a voice. Looking to his side, he saw Sai kneeling next to him.

"Oh, hey, Sai… Thanks for waking me up… What are you doing here, anyway...?" Naruto asked groggily, before suddenly remembering his own surroundings.

"I should be asking you that, Naruto. Why were you sleeping on the bridge…?" Sai asked.

"I dunno. I didn't really mean to fall asleep when I came out here. I just wanted to get some fresh air. Guess I dozed off." Naruto scratched his head, awkwardly.

Naruto always liked to act like he was okay. He wanted to *believe* he *was* .

He wanted to tell himself that he never saw dead Shinobi in his nightmares, that he didn't wake up in cold sweats every night.

He wanted to be able to say that Neji's death didn't haunt him; torment his very existence every single moment of his life, that he didn't feel guilt for having to be saved by him.

He wished he could say that he'd completely moved on from all the bad experiences he'd faced, even Jiraiya's death.

But he hadn't. And couldn't. He could never truly forget all the things he'd seen, or the people he'd lost.

But he'd sure as hell pretend that he was absolutely fine. What other choice did he have…?

"I see…" Sai sounded uncertain, as if debating whether to push the subject further, but changed the topic entirely in the end. "This might not be the time, but Kakashi-sensei asked me to come and find you. He said it's something urgent he needs to talk with us about..."

"Oh, we should probably hurry then." Naruto assumed, getting up. "I bet it's a mission."

"It is possible." Sai said simply. However, he couldn't help but get the feeling that that wasn't it. He couldn't place why, given that they only exchanged a few words after he turned in a recent mission report, but Kakashi had seemed kind of... off earlier when they spoke.

"I swear, it better not be another one of those lousy D rank missions, like helping move boxes, because those are for little kids and I've been so bored the past few days, ya know!" Naruto exclaimed.

Sai watched in some odd amusement, listening to his hyperactive teammate ramble on.

…

"Hey, Kakashi-sensei, you needed something?" Naruto didn't even think before barging into Kakashi's office.

"Haven't you ever heard of knocking…?" Kakashi sighed, not expecting an apology and not bothering to remind him it's Hokage now. After all, to Team 7, he would always be their teacher before their Hokage. "And since you asked, yes, there's something important I need to tell you two as part of Team 7. It's about Sakura."

Naruto grew stiff, and Sai didn't particularly look any more comfortable. They'd briefly wondered why she wasn't with them.

"What is it? What's going on? Did something happen to her? She's okay, right?" Naruto immediately started to panic, his mind thinking over all the possibilities that Kakashi could have been hinting at with this conversation. He'd already lost Jiraiya and Neji. If something bad happened to Sakura, he would-

"Calm down, Naruto." Kakashi tried to soothe him. "Sakura's going to be just fine, but she is in the hospital right now, so it's probably going to be a little while before she'll be able to go on missions again."

"In the hospital? Why? What happened?" Naruto probed, concern for his teammate getting the best of him.

Kakashi side glanced. This was going to be hard to explain. "Last night… she tried to take her own life. Her mother found her and brought her to the hospital. Currently, she's with Lady Fifth."

"What…?" Naruto stammered, feeling his entire being go cold. Sakura was the strongest girl he knew. The headstrong one who always kept him in check when he was going off the rails, who he admired. "Th-There's no way... Sakura-chan wouldn't do that… She... I- I don't understand…"

Had there been signs, but he'd just been too oblivious to see them? She always seemed so happy. How had he missed it?!

"....Why would Sakura want to die…?" Sai mused, voicing Naruto's own thoughts, before suddenly recalling something.

"Sai, can I ask you something…?"

"What is it...?"

"Do you ever feel like your life is beyond your control? Like it's going somewhere that you don't even know anymore…? Where you just need to get away from it?"

"Well, I may not feel the exact same thing as you described, but I have experienced something similar. Back when I was in the Foundation, I saw myself as nothing but a tool to Lord Danzo. I used to think I had no will or emotions of my own, but being put on Team 7, I think, changed that. I feel… happier somehow. I've learned that it's okay to live for myself… Why do you ask?"

"Oh, no reason. I was just wondering. Ignore me."

Her smile that day… It had been fake. Yet he hadn't pressed the matter at all. He had no idea that she meant-

"Your guess is as good as mine it seems…" Kakashi sighed. "Listen, you two."

Naruto and Sai looked up. "Sakura is going to need as much support as she can get right now, so you're going to have to be patient with her, even if she tries to push you away. Can you do that?"

"Yeah, of course." Naruto nodded, with desperation.

Sai then looked back up making his determination known. "...I'm still not very good at this sort of thing, but Sakura's my comrade, so I want to help in any way I can."

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A/N: Welp it was a little something.

Pairing with Naruto is undecided, but whatever it ends up as will be a background thing at most.

Chapter 4

Story: Haze Chapter 4

Disclaimer: I don't own Naruto.

A/N: This chapter will discuss rape, (not explicit, but very much referrenced), so be warned!

…

Beep.

Beep.

Beep.

Sakura was awakened by the sound of machines and lights blaring. She squinted, but opened her eyes to remember that she was in a hospital room. A couple nurses were whispering about something nearby, and Tsunade seemed about to nod off in her chair.

I shouldn't be alive right now… I'm supposed to be dead.

The realization hit her like bricks and tears welled up in her eyes.

*Yet I couldn't even do **that** right…*

"Sakura…" Tsunade's voice snapped her out of her thoughts as tears were streaming down her face. The two nurses looked up as well.

Sakura briefly looked over at her master before turning away, wiping away her tears. "Shishou… I… I'm sorry... My mom was right. You shouldn't have stayed with me like this… You didn't need to do that. After all, you have your own problems to deal with…"

"Sakura, listen to me." Tsunade said, placing a hand on her forearm. Sakura tensed up at the physical contact, not going unnoticed by Tsunade. Whether it was out of shame for her wounds or another reason entirely, it was impossible to tell. "You are my *disciple* . There is nothing in this world that would make me regret being here with you."

Sakura was silent for a moment, before speaking back up. "Aren't you mad at me...? I *did lie* to you..."

At hearing that, Tsunade once again became all too aware of the scars on Sakura's arms and let out a shaky sigh."...While it's true I wish you'd talked to me, I'm not mad at you. And I don't give a damn what your mother says, she had no right to make you feel like that."

Sakura swallowed, but said nothing further after that. As if on cue, one of the nurses from earlier, walked over with a clipboard.

"H-Hi, I hope you won't mind if I interrupt…"

"Of course not. Go right ahead." Tsunade smiled lightly.

"Um, Haruno-san…? It's good to see that you're finally awake. Would you mind answering a few questions for me…?"

"Sure, if I feel like it..." Sakura said, looking away. It came off a little harsher than intended, so she immediately apologized. "Sorry, that was rude of me."

"No, it's entirely fine…" The nurse smiled. "I understand that this kind of thing can be hard to talk about, so if there's something you don't want to tell me, you don't have to, alright?"

Sakura gave no affirmation, but made no attempt to say no either. The first questions were simple. Her name, date of birth, her address, her mother's and father's name, etc.

That she could handle.

But then it started to get into more personal questions.

"Are you on any kind of drugs or medication?"

"No."

"Do you ever drink alcohol?"

"Sometimes."

"What is your marital status?"

"Single, I think…" Sakura had to pause and think there. "or at least unmarried."

Sasuke had give no confirmation of anything. She had no clue what he had meant by "I'll see you soon". At the time, it had made her so happy. Now, she didn't know anymore. What even were they aside from teammates? Did he even *want* them to be something? Did *she* ? Once again, she didn't know. And nor did she want to even think about it. Hadn't for a while, ever since-

"Are you having thoughts of harming yourself or others?"

"...That should be obvious, considering why I'm here..." Sakura said simply, basically giving a yes without actually outright saying it.

"Is there any chance that you could be pregnant?"

Sakura's entire being froze at hearing that question, feeling sick to her stomache. Her head started spinning, her heart thumping in her chest faster than she thought was humanly possible.

She couldn't tell them. If Tsunade found out, she would- they would-

"...Haruno-san…?" The nurse inquired softly.

"Sakura…" Tsunade tried carefully when there was still no response, on alert by the implication of her lack of answer.

Sakura swallowed, feeling her entire being shut down, knowing she couldn't lie about it. If she was, they would find out sooner or later. The next words that came out of her mouth filled Tsunade's entire being with a cold dread: "I… I don't know… I'm sorry."

God, *no* .

"Sakura, did somebody…?" Tsunade couldn't even finish the sentence, but Sakura knew what she was asking.

"...I-I wanted to stop him… But I couldn't- I-" The girl's shoulders began to shake, and Sakura once again found herself falling to tears, cursing herself for being such a crybaby. For being so weak. She hated it. She hated *herself* .

"No…" Tsunade said softly. "Don't you dare blame yourself for this. *None* of this is your fault."

She was immediately beside herself. She wanted to *kill* the person who had done this to her student. How *dare* they lay their filthy hands on her?

"But it *is* my fault for freezing up! I'm supposed to be one of the strongest out there, trained by the best, but I couldn't even stop some guy from taking advantage of me!" Sakura snapped back, as she began to dig into her wrist with her nails. She didn't even seem to realize what she was doing. "I didn't know how to react... I-I trusted him… but-"

"Sakura, look at me." Tsunade said, sternly, reaching up and placing hand over Sakura's to stop her from scratching her arm any more. Sakura hesitated for a moment, but soon turned to meet her own tear-filled gaze. "Even the strongest people freeze up sometimes. We *don't* always know how to react. But that doesn't make it okay. You are *not* responsible for what he did to you."

Sakura swallowed, as if considering her words, before breaking eye-contact and looking away.

Tsunade sighed, hoping more than anything that what she said got through to her.

And Sakura wanted to believe her, she really did. But it still didn't stop her from feeling to blame. It didn't stop how weak she felt, nor how much she hated herself.

She could still feel him on top of her. She could still feel his hands on her wrists, pinning her down. She could hear his voice telling her that they were "just having a little fun", that she "needn't be so tense". She could still feel the terror as somebody she'd grown to trust pushed himself inside of her, her body on fire. She could still feel all of it as if it was currently happening.

Sakura wasn't even aware of her surroundings anymore, she barely registered when the nurse thanked her for answering what questions she did and left the room.

Suddenly, she couldn't breathe anymore, feeling the room closing in on her and gasping for air. Even in her mental state, she was able to realize that she was panicking, but could do nothing to stop it from consuming her.

"Sakura…" Tsunade's hand rested on her shoulder, but the teen didn't know it was Tsunade, so started to fight back, clawing at her, pushing her away, and shouting at her to get away.

"Sakura, it's me…! I'm not going to hurt you, but you have to calm down, *please...* !" Tsunade desperately pled, as she held onto the girl's wrists, to stop her from thrashing. "Breathe…! Breathe… *Breathe* … That's it, you're doing good. Just stay with me..."

Slowly, bit by bit. Sakura remembered her surroundings, and calmed down.

"Shishou, I… I'm so sorry… I..." Sakura pulled away, apologetically. "I just got so overwhelmed and I-!"

Tsunade reached a hand up to rub her on the head, cutting her off. "You have nothing to be sorry for, Sakura… I'm just glad that you finally calmed down."

Tsunade had so many questions she still wanted to ask, like who assaulted her, or if she wanted to get tested, but all of that would have to wait. Right now just wasn't a good time.

…

A/N: Wow, that was some heavy shit. Hope I played up the Mom!Tsunade thing well enough. I'm a literal sucker for it, especially when angst is involved. Seriously, there's not enough of it.

Chapter 5

Story: Haze, Chapter 5

Disclaimer: I don't own Naruto.

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"Haruno-san? You have some visitors."

Sakura looked up when a nurse stepped into her room, followed by Naruto and Sai, who thanked the lady. Immediately, she froze up and looked away, as if ashamed.

It wasn't a surprise that they would have been told, but it was still discomforting nonetheless. She had no idea what to say, and and was *afraid* of what *they* would say.

"Man, this hospital seriously needs more people on staff. It took *forever* to get in." Naruto muttered, folding his hands over his head.

"It wasn't *that* long of a wait, was it?" Sai tilted his head, a bit baffled by Naruto's statement. Then again, Naruto never had really been the most patient person before, he supposed.

"Ah, Naruto, Sai! It's good to see you two. It's been a while." Tsunade smiled at them, light-heartedly, before Naruto could have responded to his inquiry.

"Oh, hey, Obaa-chan! Kakashi-sensei said you would be here." Naruto returned the gesture. "How've you been?"

"I'm managing well enough, but I hope you've been taking care of yourself." Tsunade said, giving him a suspicious look.

"'Course, I'm doing just *great* ! You know me, I'm as tough as they come." Naruto grinned, but sounded a bit uncertain of his own words, worrying Tsunade somewhat, especially after what had been going on.

"We heard what happened, so we made sure to come here as soon as possible." Sai offered an explanation, feeling somehow out of place...

"Thank you for coming… She just woke up a short while ago." Tsunade informed them, pointing at the bed Sakura was on.

Naruto and Sai then looked back over to Sakura, who avoided eye contact.

"Um… Hey, there, Sakura-chan." Naruto approached her sheepishly. Even he knew how touchy this subject could be and didn't want to say anything to upset her. He chose not to comment on the scars on her arms.

"Oh, hey." Sakura said softly.

"How are you feeling…?" Sai asked, not realizing at all how insensitive it might have seemed.

Before Sakura could respond, Naruto jabbed Sai in the arm, hissing beneath his breath at him in irritation, "Sai, you're never supposed to ask somebody who tried to kill themselves, *'How are you feeling?'...* ! It's just not okay, ya know...!"

"Why not...?" Sai looked at him, seeming a little hurt and frustrated. "I thought you were *supposed* to ask somebody who's been feeling down how they're feeling, or at least that's what it said in the book…"

"Well, you're *not...* ! It's just *wrong* in a situation like this...! *Think about it* , she just tried to take her own life, of *course* she's not feeling well...! Just *stop* with the books already, okay? These are the kinds of things you just have to figure out for yourself." Naruto sighed.

"...I'm sorry, Sakura…" Sai said after a moment, feeling guilty and flustered as he looked away. "I'm still trying my best to understand how all of this works; it's just very hard for me to know how to respond in some situations…"

"...Please, don't worry about it…" Sakura spoke up for the first time since they got there, offering him a weak smile. "I'm not mad, really. You were only trying to help, right…?"

In truth, hearing them fussing over her made her feel guilty. She didn't know how much more she would have been able to take if it had continued. Sai seemed uncertain.

That was where Naruto felt a little guilty himself, scratching the back of his head nervously. "Yeah, I'm sorry too, Sai… I shouldn't have fussed at you like that… It's not like you knew. I've just been kinda stressed about all this, ya know?"

"It's alright..." Sai murmured, looking away momentarily. "Sakura, a few weeks ago, you asked me if I'd ever been in a situation where I needed to escape from. This is what you were referring to, wasn't it...?"

Sakura looked back up at him with glossy eyes, confirming his suspicious without outright saying it.

"I'm sorry for not realizing it sooner. I should have known you meant suicide..." Sai grew flustered, as he gazed down. It was quite rare to see him look this vulnerable.

"Sai...," Sakura said softly. "this isn't your fault, none of it is... I'm the one who chose this…"

"Even so, I should have noticed it…" Sai countered. "Those scars on your arms. They’re from self-harm, aren’t they...?"

Sakura looked away as a stiff silence formed between them.

"...I once did the same thing." Sai said in a low voice, shocking everybody in the room. "After my brother died, I thought it would help me feel something, but it didn't… It just made things worse. I can't say I know exactly what you're going through right now, and I may *never* fully understand, but if you ever need to talk, I'll um... be willing to listen."

"...Thanks." Sakura replied after a moment, feeling like it was the only appropriate thing to say. "Sorry for upsetting everybody…"

"H-hey, what are you apologizing for...? Nobody's mad at you. We're just worried is all..." Naruto smiled even though it was obvious just how nervous he was. He hadn't said much at all to Sakura the whole time he'd been there. He was scared to death when he heard the news, sure, but as soon as he'd met eyes with her, he had suddenly been at a loss of words. He fidgeted with his pants. "...I really wanna do something for you, to cheer you up, but the truth is I don't even know what to say, and I'm kind of afraid of making everything worse, ya know…? I honestly feel helpless right now..."

It was odd hearing Naruto say such things. After all, he was usually always the one who had the answers to everything. But now, he hardly knew how to respond. Yet that wouldn't stop him from trying.

"Even so… I really don't want want to lose you…" he continued, growing a bit desperate. "I know things may seem hard right now, but I'm sure we can work through it, so please, please promise me that you'll at least try, Sakura-chan. If something happened to you, I don't know what I'd do..."

"Naruto…" Sakura murmured, trying to think of how to respond, shocked by his words.

Sai reached up and did what he thought was appropriate in the moment; placed a hand on his shoulder. Much to his relief, Naruto seemed to relax a bit at the touch.

However, there were still tears were welling up in his eyes. Naruto hardly ever cried, but this was one of those instances where he couldn't stop himself. "You could have talked to me…! You know that, right? You *still* can..."

Sakura was silent for a moment at hearing him, before speaking up weakly. "...I didn't want to bother you... I've already caused you enough trouble as it is, so it would have been selfish of me-"

"No, you're wrong, it's *never* selfish to rely on a friend!" Naruto vehemently shook his head. "If you'd come to me, I would have listened as long as you needed me to, whether it be all day or all night, or even all week!"

"Naruto…" Sakura said, considering his words, before giving a small smile, ignoring the tears welling up in her eyes, yet again. "Thank you… all of you… This really means a lot to me..."

Once again, it just felt like the right thing to say. In truth, she still wanted to die. In truth, the voice in the back of her head telling her to just end it all and be done with it was just as loud as it ever was. In truth, she still felt like tearing her skin to pieces and had no plans of stopping.

But, even so she didn't want to disappoint them.

"Don't mention it." Naruto smiled back, painfully.

Tsunade watched them from the side, but had chose not to say anything, giving them the space they needed as part of team 7.

Sai's throat had uncomfortably tightened when he saw that Sakura's smile was forced.

"Sakura… You can be honest with us if you want to." he offered. "You don't have to pretend to feel better if you're not..."

Something in his words struck a cord with her, and she looked away.

"...The truth is I'm just… really tired... of everything right now. It's nothing against any of you… I think that I just need some time is all."

"I understand…" Sai acknowledged.

"Yeah, of course, take all the time you need...!" Naruto insisted, grinning. "But as soon as you get better, we should all go out for ramen, alright…?"

"Yeah..." Sakura nodded, as she gazed back over at them and for just a brief moment, she wished things *could* be alright.

But unfortunately, she knew all too well that things were never that simple.

…

A/N: I hope this turned out well enough. The whole time I've been writing this, and for about a weeknowI've been dealing with the back of my throat closing in so it's been very annoying. I'm planning to go to the doctor tomorrow to make sure I don't have some cancer or something. Fun fun. Anyway, sorry this wasn't a lot but it was something.

I hope I pulled off Naruto well enough in this. I feel like he would want more than anything to be there for Sakura in this situation, but not exactly know how to handle it, as many people in real life wouldn't, but it is Naruto, so of course he'd throw in the speech about trusting him.

And Sakura in this is heavily based off my own experiences. Suicidal thoughts and self-harm isn't something that just goes away over night. It sticks with you, the urges, feelings and everything. For me, it took weeks for me to feel even a little better.

And I've been applying my own experiences to this story, so I hope y'all are enjoying it for what it is. ;w;

Planning on bringing in Ino and Sasuke really soon btw!

Chapter 6

Story: Haze, Chapter 6

A/N: Sorry it's been so long… A lot of things have been holding me back, but I was finally able to write some more yay.

I hope y'all enjoy this chapter, because I really don't like how I wrote it.

…

After Naruto and Sai had left, which was about thirty minutes later, Sakura was once again left with the thoughts in her head. She wanted nothing more than to draw blood, but with Tsunade watching she knew it was impossible. Feeling agitation creep up in her in her chest, tears once again clung to the corners of her eyes.

If only she hadn't failed at killing herself, then she wouldn't even be here right now. As it was, she was just holding everybody else back.

Sure, maybe they'd be sad, but they'd all move on eventually, right?

"Sakura, is something wrong...?" Tsunade said softly, trying to get her attention.

"N-No, ma'am. It's nothing…" Sakura choked out, trying her best to wipe away her tears. Much to her frustration, they kept falling. *Why can't I just stop crying already!?*

Tsunade got up, pulling the emotional girl into an embrace. "You know you can talk to me, right…? I'm here for you."

"...Tell me… Why does it hurt so bad, Shishou…? I just want to make them stop… I just want these feelings to go away… What's so wrong about that? Why am I so bad for that?" Sakura melted into her embrace, her shoulders trembling.

"...I'm sorry… I know you're in pain right now, Sakura… But suicide isn't the way to deal with something like that… I'm sure you know that by now." Tsunade softly rested a hand on top of her head.

Sakura only found herself crying harder after that. Because down deep, a part of her knew it was true. But it was the only thing she could think of to make it go away.

She opened her mouth to say that, but was stopped when the door busted open and Ino stepped in, with wide and tear filled eyes. "Sakura…!"

"Ino…! I-" Sakura looked up, startled, quickly wiping her eyes to the best of her ability. She was immediately cut off by her friend.

"Kakashi-sensei told me everything. Why didn't you just come talk to me if you were feeling that way...? You have no idea how scared I was when I heard what happened..." Ino couldn't

hold back from hugging Sakura.

"*I really don't want to lose you."* is what she wanted to say, just as Naruto had, but it was left unspoken, because Sakura got the message.

"...I'm sorry for worrying you, but, really, I'm fine now. It's okay…" Sakura said, pulling back a bit. However, Ino entirely disagreed.

"Like hell it is! You just tried to kill yourself! How in the world does that seem okay to you?" Ino retorted.

"...I'm sorry… I..." Sakura couldn't even bring herself to finish her sentence, pulling in on herself at hearing her sharp tone.

Ino immediately felt a bit guilty at seeing her reaction, trying her best to calm down.

"No, no, don't apologize… You didn't know how else to deal with what you were feeling. I get it..." She reached out and gently cupped her hands, trying her best to not notice the self-harm scars on her rival's arms. She immediately felt a sense of helplessness for not having paid closer attention before this. "Listen, when you get out of here, I want you to come stay with me and get away from your mom for a while. All she's ever done is made everything worse for you, and right now, you need as much support as you can get, so please, just let me help you…"

Kakashi had told her how Mibuki had acted last night, and quite frankly she wasn't surprised, because her mother had always been like that, dismissing Sakura's feelings and invalidating her struggles entirely. That, of course, wasn't to say she wasn't any less disgusted.

But more than disgust towards Mibuki or anything else right now, all she could feel was an overwhelming fear and concern for the girl in front of her. She didn't know exactly what had caused Sakura to want to kill herself, or even really what was going on in her mind right now, but she'd do everything she could to make sure it didn't happen again.

"But I'd just get in the way if I stayed with you, Ino… I really shouldn't." Sakura quickly brushed her idea off bashfully, avoiding her gaze a bit sheepishly. She had already caused everybody so much trouble as it was, so that? It was just too much.

Besides, the idea of being under Ino's watch didn't exactly offer her any comfort.

"Stop cutting yourself so short, Sakura! I'm serious here! You're staying with me and that's final!" Ino had clearly made up her mind. Who was Sakura to shoot her down after that display?

"O-okay…" Sakura unintentionally stammered. "But I'll have to get some of my stuff from my place before I do..."

"Of course… I'll start clearing up some space in the house so you'll have a place to sleep at, and in the meantime, I just want you to get some rest, okay?" Ino smiled softly.

"Alright. Thanks, Ino." Sakura nodded, straining to return the gesture. It wasn't really like it mattered to her where she stayed, after all. It wouldn't change the way she felt. Sure, it might be harder to hide things, but she'd find a way to work around it.

"Don't mention it. I'll see you later." Ino hugged her once again, before she started to leave the room, briefly exchanging greetings with Tsunade while she was at it.

Tsunade couldn't blame Ino for being in such a hurry. Her bond with Sakura went all the way back to when they were little kids. If not for their shared feelings for Sasuke, she would have almost thought they were a couple or something by the way they the way they interacted sometimes.

"Ino's amazing, isn't she?" Sakura suddenly said, catching her attention. She looked down at her lap, rubbing one of her scars. "Not only is she beautiful, but she's always so confident... I really envied that about her back when we were kids. She kept coming to my rescue and telling me to think more highly of myself. I vowed to become stronger so I wouldn't be in her shadow anymore. But just look at me… In the end, all I did was cause trouble for her again..."

"Sakura… There is nothing at all wrong about needing help sometimes." Tsunade insisted, as Sakura looked up to meet her eyes. "It's completely normal. I know you probably don't see it in yourself, but I took you on as my student because I saw that strength inside of you. I already knew just by looking at you that you were the type to push forward no matter what obstacle you faced, and I believe in you. It's true that you've faced a set back, and it could take time to get back on your feet… Even so, you don't have to do this alone… You have so many people that are here for you, so, please... At least try to give yourself a chance… Can you do that…?"

Sakura immediately felt herself melt at her words. She would never say it out loud, but Tsunade was almost like a mother to her sometimes, more like one than her own mother, so hearing how insistent she was on getting her to trust them, something inside of her felt inclined to believe in her. "...I can't… make any promises, but… I'll try… for you, Tsunade-Shisshou..."

Tsunade couldn't possibly be more happy at her response.

…

A/N: It's not a lot, but it's been forever since I updated so I wanted to get something up. I'll also probably bring in Sasuke sometime in the next couple chapters btw.

And as for pairings with Naruto? It's still undecided because it won't really be that important, since it'll be more of a background thing, but I could go several different ones, like GaaNaru, SaiNaru or SasuNaru or something idk yet. Probably it'll be a gay pairing since I'm already doing one with Sakura as well. I'm basically okay with any of them? I guess time will tell since my main focus pairing is InoSaku right now?

Chapter 7

Story: Haze, Chapter 7

Sorry everybody, my grandma passed away due to a stroke last week, so I've not been feeling very well lately. Updates will probably not be as frequent for a while.

...

Sakura had always been one to watch her diet, scolding herself when she ate unhealthy foods, but currently her vengeance against food was worse than ever, as she couldn't even stand to look at the plate that was brought into her room later that day after Ino had left.

"You know, you really *should* try to eat, Sakura. I know you probably don't want to, but you need *something* on your stomach." Tsunade said, urging her to eat something. She could easily tell that Sakura hadn't been eating much at all, and she could even go as far as to say that the girl had been starving herself. Whether it was out of lack of self-care or an intentional avoidance of food, however, she still had yet to know.

"I'm not hungry." Sakura said simply, not turning to face her.

Tsunade let out a small sigh, knowing that there was only so much she could do. After all, she wasn't going to force it down her throat if she didn't want to eat. Still, she wished there was something she could do.

"Can you at least talk to me? Is it the food you don't like? If there's something else you'd want instead, I can work it out with the staff." She offered.

"No, it's not that… I… I just can't… Everything I put in my mouth always just makes me sick… It…" Tears welled up in Sakura's eyes as she hesitated to continue. She pulled in on herself, hiding her face. "It always tastes like *him* … I feel so disgusting every time I… I can handle water, but that's about it, and even that's… I'm sorry..."

She couldn't finish her sentences and left things vague, but with enough context for Tsunade to be able to draw the connection.

The blonde's eyes softened, as she reached a hand up to comfort her student. "Don't apologize… I understand… I just wish I could do more to help you… If only I had noticed something before that happened, maybe I could have stopped it from-"

Hearing Tsunade be so open and honest with her quite frankly caught Sakura off guard. She turned to her master, a pain-filled expression on her face.

"No, no, Shisshou, please… Don't say that… None of this your fault… You've already done more for me than I could ever make up for. You always continued believing in me even when I had doubts in myself and you taught me so much about how to be strong, yet all I've done is gone and make you look bad by letting that happen and ending up in this place..."

"Sakura, you have done nothing wrong." Tsunade quickly insisted. "You're a *survivor* . I know it probably won't make much difference hearing me say this, but there's no reason to feel shame for that."

At hearing that, Sakura briefly looked into her eyes, as if contemplating her words, and, for the first time, *almost* felt inclined to consider them. After all, Tsunade wasn't the type who said such things unless she meant it wholeheartedly.

If only she could see in herself what everybody else saw in her.

She looked away again, and didn't say anything for a long period of time. Finally, after what surely felt like hours, she spoke back up again, in a low voice, her nervousness all too obvious. "...Shisshou… I wanted to get tested, just in case I'm…"

...In case I'm pregnant.

She couldn't even finish the sentence, but Tsunade knew what she meant.

Tsunade gently placed a comforting hand on the top of her head, sending a surge of warmth through Sakura's face and chest. Sakura had always secretly considered Tsunade to be like a mother to her, but right now, it was hitting like a ton of bricks. Her teacher was always so nice and compassionate when it came down to it. She had an extremely soft side which she only showed on occasion beneath her tough exterior and that more than made it enjoyable being around her.

Tsunade gave a broken-hearted smile. "...If it's what you want, Sakura, then I'll be right here with you… okay?"

She was more than grateful when Sakura, with apprehension, finally uttered out a small, "...okay."

…

Kakashi wasn't by any means a stranger to nightmares. Even now, he still had the occasional vivid dreams of his hand sticking through Rin's chest, blood covering his arm and the expression on her face, her voice coughing out his name in her last moments, all before she collapsed in his arms. But one he hadn't had dreamed of in a while was of his father.

And yet, now that his own student had tried to kill herself, it somehow caused the memory of finding his father dead on the floor in a pile of his own blood to once again come back full force in the moment he accidentally found himself drifting off due to exhaustion. Needless to say it was not a good reminder.

The helplessness he had felt back then was indescribable, and it felt like he was right back at square one, having failed to stop somebody important to him from trying to take her own life. Although it was true that Sakura was alive, it didn't make the feeling any easier whatsoever.

He sighed, running a hand through his hair. He leaned back in his chair, as he tried to calm his screwed up nerves.

"Hm?" He looked up when he saw a messenger hawk flying towards his window.

It seems Sasuke must have responded.

He didn't even hesitate for a moment to take away the paper from the bird. The message was short, but somewhat reassuring at the very least, and yet, judging by the scratchy handwriting, it appeared to have been written in a rush, making it clear that Sasuke was just as concerned about his teammate as the others were:

I'll try be back in a couple of days. Just look after her in the meantime.

…

Sakura was no doubt relieved when the results came back as negative, but the temporary happiness was almost immediately replaced by the familiar feeling of dirtiness she had become all too used to by now. Whether she was pregnant or not didn't change the fact that she had still been...

It could never take away the memory of him pushing himself inside of her.

She had had her virginity stolen from her for absolutely *nothing* ! She was nothing more than some damaged goods now. *Disgusting. Worthless. Ruined.*

Tsunade quickly recognized the expression on her face all too well, whispering a soft "come here" as she gently offered yet another embrace that day. Sakura surprisingly found herself relaxing at the comforting gesture.

For just a little while, part of the girl tried to tell herself maybe it would be alright, but immensely found herself annoyed when the overwhelming urge, to not only rip her skin to pieces, but also scrub herself raw in a shower until she cleaned all of the filth out of her body, began to consume her like a burning flame that continued to grow stronger as it ate away at her chest.

Once again, that same old voice in the back of her head started screaming out "I want to die" over and over again. The most she could do to barely avoid scratching her own arm was grip at the fabric of Tsunade's shirt, she felt so helpless against the thoughts inside her head.

She hated it. She hated being this weak, but the self-loathing and memories were unbearable.

"You're so beautiful…"

She just wanted it to stop.

"Relax, we're just having a little fun..."

She wanted to stop everything. His hands wouldn't stop touching her, they continued groping and exploring her body. The smell of alcohol filled her senses.

"Oh, *don't give me that look... I can tell you want this just as much as I do. See, you're just like me when it comes down to it.* "

She wanted to stop thinking, to escape everything inside of her head.

She need to stop *breathing* .

…

A/N: It will get better, I promise, but it's gonna be a while. Recovery doesn't happen over night, after all. I am enjoying writing mama!Tsunade way too much, I'm sorry… I can't help it.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!